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ABSTRACT

A study designed to assess the concurrent validity of the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate (which measures the amount of language spoken) in relation to the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scale (which measures the quality of language spoken) was conducted with a sample of Spanish-surnamed exceptional children from a lower-middle class elementary school in the Southwestern United States. Taken from a predominantly Spanish-surnamed school and neighborhood, the sample included 7 boys and 7 girls whose mean chronological age was 118 months. Parents of each child were also interviewed in an attempt to determine the relationship between students' and parents' responses to the Home Bilingual. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish with both children and parents. Data revealed no significant difference between the students' scores and the parents' estimates and implied that the Home Bilingual may be administered to the child rather than to the parent with equal success. There was a positive relationship between the two tests when they were administered in Spanish but not when they were administered in English. Thus, the Home Bilingual had more validity for measuring language dominance in Spanish than in English. Low scores on both the Spanish and English portions of the Dos Amigos implied that the subjects had only a surface knowledge of both languages. Although test scores were poor, other evidence indicated that the children were able to use their existing linguistic skills for communicative purposes. (CM)

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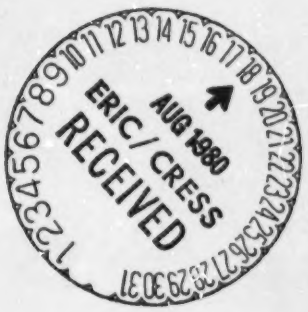

Concurrent Validity of the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the validity of the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate, a quick screening test designed to determine whether English or Spanish is the dominant language spoken by and to the child. The Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales, a commonly used test which measures the ability of the child to express word opposites in English and Spanish was used as the criterion.

The sample group was comprised of 14 Spanish surnamed children from the third (N = 8) and fourth (N = 6) grade population who had been assigned to the Resource Room and their parents. No significant difference was found between the children's and parents' scores on language usage in the home.

Results of this study indicated that a significant relationship does not exist between the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate, English language, and the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales, English language. A significant relationship existed between the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate, Spanish language. An analysis of the study revealed that 11 (N = 14) of the sample group scored below the fiftieth percentile in the Spanish portion of the Dos Amigos Spanish language, and 9 (N = 14) scored below the fiftieth percentile in the English portion of the Dos Amigos.

Introduction

Levensky (1970) defined bilingualism as the ability to be fluent in two languages. Bilingualism involves a number of skills, including speaking, writing and comprehending written or oral communication (Ulibarri, 1970). A truly bilingual child is almost as comfortable in a second language as he is in his mother tongue. However, there are probably few truly bilingual children, and most children would fall at some point on a continuum.

There are a large number of children in U. S. public schools whose primary language is not English and who have special communication difficulties when interacting in monolingual English social contexts. These difficulties may hinder social maturity and cause him to become uneasy, tense, and reluctant to express himself verbally (Levensky, 1970). The errors he makes in pronunciation may cause ridicule from his peers, which further inhibits his oral language (Zintz, 1969). A far more serious problem is that of misclassification and misplacement of students solely on the basis of linguistic differences (Gonzalez, 1973).

In an attempt to meet the diverse needs of this unique population, there has been a recent surge of federally funded bilingual education programs in the United States (Zinkel, 1973). Federal funds from such sources as Title I, III, VI, VII, and VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) have supplemented local and state support to stimulate the growth of such programs. The recent growth of these bilingual programs as well as legislative mandates (Lau guidelines) have stimulated the need for instruments to assess the degree of bilingualism among students whose primary language is not English.

A child's dominant language is the language most often spoken in the child's home, that is to say, both mother and father speak one main language (BABEL, 1969).

According to the Task Force Findings Specifying Remedies Available for Eliminating Past Educational Practices Ruled Unlawful Under Lau vs. Nichols (1975), assessments should be made by persons who can speak and comprehend the necessary language. Presently, there are several commercially available tests which require the examiner to speak both languages. Examples of these tests are the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales (Critchlow, 1974), Test For Auditory Comprehension of Language English/Spanish (Carrow, 1973), James Language Dominance Test (James, 1974) and the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate (Skoczylas, 1971). The Home Bilingual Usage Estimate and the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales are two widely used instruments for determining language dominance. Both instruments are said to measure different aspects of language. The Home Bilingual is a measure of the amount of language spoken, while the Dos Amigos is a measure of the quality of language spoken.

The present investigation was designed to assess the concurrent validity of the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate in relation to the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scale with a sample of exceptional children. In the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate, Skoczylas (1971) suggests that the interview be conducted with the parents if the subject is a child. In addition, the study attempted to determine the relationship between students' and parents' responses to the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate.

Method

Subjects. The study was conducted in a lower-middle-class elementary school in the Southwestern United States. The population of the school and the neighborhood surrounding it was predominantly Spanish-surnamed.

The sample included 14 Spanish-surnamed children from the third (N = 8) and fourth (N = 6) grade population who had been assigned part-time to a resource

room. The only available assessment data on the subjects indicated Harris-Goodenough Draw-a-Person scores with a mean of 70 (S.D. = 9.95).

The sample was comprised of 7 boys and 7 girls whose chronological age ranged from 105 months 150 months with a mean C.A. of 118 months (SD = 11.1).

The parents of each child in the study were also interviewed. As with the children, the interview was conducted in English and in Spanish.

Instruments. The Home Bilingual Usage Estimate uses an interview procedure to measure a person's language usage and yield a numerical index in each language. The resulting classifications are: English monolingual, English dominant, apparent bilingual, Spanish dominant, and Spanish monolingual (Skoczylas, 1971).

The Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales are scales in which a child's ability to name word opposites in a given language is assessed (Critchlow, 1974). The instrument yields a numerical index in each language.

Procedure. Each child was oriented to the purpose of the study and an explanation of the test instruments was given.

The sample was randomly divided into two groups, and testing was conducted in two sessions. Test administration for the two groups was counterbalanced.

The parents of each child were administered the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate in English and Spanish. Administration of both instruments was in English and in Spanish.

Results

The students' and parents' scores are found in Table 1. A Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient was calculated between child's total score (English) and Parents' total score (English) on the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate. The resulting coefficient was $r = .96$ ($p < .01$). A coefficient was also calculated

between child's total score (Spanish) and parents' total score (Spanish). The resulting correlation was significant ($r = .94$, $p < .01$). Analysis with the Mann-Whitney U test showed that no significant difference existed between the student's scores and the parents' scores on the Home Bilingual English ($U = 83.5$, $z = .78$) and the Home Bilingual Spanish ($U = 87.5$, $z = .56$).

The Spearman Rank-Order Coefficient was used in determining the relationship of the two tests administered to the students. A rho of .23 (N.S.) was obtained between scores on the Home Bilingual (English) and the Dos Amigos (English). There was a significant relationship ($r = .853$, $p < .05$) between the Home Bilingual Spanish language score and the Dos Amigos Spanish language indices.

An additional finding was the poor performance of many of the subjects on both the English language and Spanish language subtests of the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales. 9 of the 14 subjects scored below the fiftieth percentile on the English subtest, and 11 of the 14 scored below the fiftieth percentile on the Spanish subtest.

In summary, there was no significant difference between the students' scores and the parents' estimates on the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate. In addition, there was no significant relationship between the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate and the Dos Amigos Test for students in English, but the opposite was true for the Spanish portions of the tests. Analysis of individual performance showed that many of the subjects tended to perform poorly on both the English and Spanish language subtests of the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the concurrent validity of the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate, and to determine the effects of having students versus parents respond to the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate.

The results of this study revealed no significant difference between the students' score and the parents' estimates. These data imply that the Home

Bilingual may be administered to the child rather than the parent with equal success. However, further study with a larger sample is necessary to support this hypothesis.

An additional finding of the study was that a significant positive relationship existed between the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate (Spanish) and the Dos Amigos (Spanish). This finding offers support for the validity of the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate as a measure of the language dominance, at least in Spanish. Since no significant relationship was found between the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate (English) and the Dos Amigos (English), caution must be exercised in making assumptions about the validity of the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate, in English.

The scores of the Home Bilingual Spanish language were considerably higher than the scores on the Dos Amigos Spanish language. This finding may have resulted from the fact that the Home Bilingual Usage Estimate is a measure of the amount of Spanish spoken rather than a measurement of the quality of Spanish spoken. Also, many of the parents in the initial conversation tended to give distorted picture of the language used in the home. An implication was frequently made that the English language was used at home. However, the data from the formal interview did not support the implication.

The results of this study showed that for this sample facility in both English and Spanish was low. This reinforces the notion that "bilingualism" in fact represents a continuum of language skills rather than a static state. This expectation reduces the reinforcement of English that he is learning in school. As a result, the child has a limited vocabulary in both languages and his basic language skills are adversely affected. This was indicated in the poor scores of children in this sample in both English and Spanish.

The results of this study raise an additional point regarding language assessment. It was found that this sample of exceptional children scored poorly

in relation to the instruments used. However, informal observation and teacher and parent contacts indicated that these children were able to use their existing linguistic skills for communicative purposes. This emphasizes the distinction that needs to be made between the strictly psycholinguistic aspects of language mastery and the sociolinguistic or pragmatic aspects. Although the linguistic aspects appear to play a major role in cognitive development, the pragmatic or communicative aspects of language can also be considered to play a major role in cognitive development and social competence. It is the authors' opinion that language assessment needs to incorporate a multi-dimensional approach.

In summary, the Home Bilingual Usage Estimte revealed no significant difference between the students' and parents' score. The student's and parent's report of language heard and spoken by the student is significantly related to the student's ability to produce word opposites in Spanish but not in English. Low scores on both the Spanish and English portions of the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scales implied that the subjects had a surface knowledge of both languages.

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Table 1

	HBL English (C)	HBL English (P)	R1	R2	D	D2
A	65	69	1	1	0	0
B	62	67	2	2	0	0
C	55	62	3	3	0	0
D	53	53	4	7	3	9
E	52	58	5	5	0	0
F	51	60	6	4	2	4
G	50	56	7	6	1	1
H	46	45	8	8	0	0
I	37	41	9	10	1	1
J	35	42	10	9	1	1
K	22	25	11	11	0	0
L	18	8	12	13	1	1
M	11	8	13	13	0	0
N	6	8	14	13	1	1
					ED2 = 18	

	HBL Spanish (C)	HBL Spanish (P)	R1	R2	D	D2
A	73	78	1	1	0	0
B	69	78	2	2	0	0
C	68	78	3	3	0	0
D	62	62	4	4	0	0
E	36	38	5	6	1	1
F	36	35	6	7	1	1
G	33	30	7	10	3	9
H	32	41	8	5	3	9
I	28	31	9	9	0	0
J	28	32	10	8	2	4
K	19	20	11	12	1	1
L	18	23	12	11	1	1
M	9	8	13	13.5	.5	.25
N	7	8	14	13.5	.5	.25
				ED2 = 26.50		